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CONSTRUCTION OF BERLIN SOUTHERN OUTER FREIGHT BELT

Kurt Wunsch

Addition of a southern belt to the northern outer freight belt had been planned for 1951.

When the World Communist Rally of Youths and Students placed great transportation problems upon the management of the Reichsbahn, the railroaders and construction industry men moved the terminal date for completion of the project from 31 December 1951 to 10 July 1951. However, this goal could be achieved only if extraordinarily rapid work, with new construction methods, were carried out in every building activity. As a matter of fact, just such new and progressive working methods were developed and applied in earthwork engineering, bridge building, and track laying.

Decades of experience in earthwork engineering and railroad construction indicated that under the most favorable conditions and with the best organization, 2 years would be necessary for the job. But only 8 months were available to finish the project before the beginning of the Youth Rally. Supported by the experience of their Soviet railroad colleagues and determined to apply new methods to the job, the heads of the Directorate General of the Reichsbahn assumed the obligation of completing the project in the available time.

However, at the very beginning of the operation it became at once apparent that progress was absolutely inadequate. There was not enough heavy machinery. The excavators could not work uninterruptedly because there was a delay in making empty trains available. There were too few construction tracks. The number of small locomotives was insufficient. Knowing that an uninterrupted flow of material transports is decisive for meeting a deadline, the construction management of the Directorate General of the Reichsbahn took the following measures:

1. Immediate employment of a sufficient number of excavators, increase of dump cars, extension of construction trackage, increase of small locomotives, and employment of mechanics from the Reichsbahn to tend and repair the locomotives and cars under the direction of two chiefs of railroad operation plants.

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2. Transfer of track maintenance and switching operations to railroaders.
3. Installation of radio communications in switching operations and establishment of a Railroad Construction Management in order better to organize the transloading for the construction sites.
4. Establishment of timetables for the transportation of excavated earth.

The result of this reorganization was that the difficulties mentioned were eliminated and daily quotas were exceeded. The absolutely new and bold utilization of the solidity of the ground and of the soil types in the removal operations carried out with heavy Reichsbahn equipment, and the assumption of complete responsibility by the Reichsbahn were decisive factors in finishing the job within the time limits. Likewise of decisive importance was the securing of the steel bridge superstructures by means of a launching crane and a 40-ton Reichsbahn rotary crane. The work on the project was expedited particularly because the heavy launching crane, with the suspended bridge girders, constituting a 30-ton axle load on the crane truck, could make use of the newly thrown up embankment. Decisive, too, were the introduction of a repair program for the rolling stock and the conclusion of complex competitions between excavator operators, engine crews, dumping squads, and track gangs.

Very great importance must be attached to the development of these complex competitions, which were set up on the basis of the construction operation plans discussed by the entire personnel. After the conclusion of such a competition, it turned out that the hauling output, which at first was far too small, had by the fifth day risen from 55 percent to 114 percent. The greatest increase was the loading of 235 trains instead of 40 full trains or, expressed in cubic meters, from 800 cubic meters of moved earth to about 5,000 cubic meters within 24 hours.

All these accomplishments, the new experiences, and the new methods can contribute towards introducing a completely new phase of development in the construction industry. The application of the experience gained in carrying out this project should contribute materially in the future to a decisive increase in labor productivity on new constructions.

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